

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 18198

EXDIS (HANDLE AS NODIS)

JERUSALEM FOR ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EG IS
SUBJECT: KAMEL'S COMPLAINT OF SECRETARY'S CHARACTERIZA-
- TION OF SADAT'S DECISION AS "OBSTACLE"

1. IN A TELECON WITH FONMIN KAMEL THIS AFTERNOON, HE EXPRESSED HIS UNHAPPINESS THAT THE SECRETARY HAD CHARACTERIZED SADAT'S REFUSAL TO PARTICIPATE IN A NEW ROUND OF TRILATERAL TALKS AS AN "OBSTACLE". KAMEL RE-ITERATED THE SENSE OF GRIEVANCE THAT HE EXPRESSED TO ROY ATHERTON AND ME YESTERDAY WHEN COMPLAINING ABOUT DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKEMAN'S DESCRIPTION OF SADAT'S DECISION AS "VERY DISAPPOINTING". HE CHARGED THAT WE SEEM TO BE SINGLING OUT THE EGYPTIANS AS THE OBSTACLE TO PEACE. THIS, HE ARGUED, IS GROSSLY UNFAIR, CONSIDERING WHAT SADAT HAS DONE TO MOVE THE PEACE PROCESS. IN CONTRAST, BEGIN REMAINS AS ADAMANT AS EVER AND YET WE MAKE NO CRITICISM OF HIS POSITION. ON THE CONTRARY, WE DESCRIBE AS POSITIVE BEGIN'S REFORMULATION INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS "SOVEREIGNTY" DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD. THIS, KAMEL INSISTED, MEANS NOTHING. USG, HE ARGUED FORCE-
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 18198 021519Z

FULLY, IS FULLY AWARE OF ISRAELI EXPANSIONIST AMBITIONS. THESE, HE CONTENDED, SHOULD BE DESCRIBED AS THE "REAL OBSTACLES" TO PEACE. KAMEL SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THAT SADAT WILL BE UPSET ABOUT THE SECRETARY'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION.

2. KAMEL ALSO RECALLED THAT NOTHING HAD BEEN SAID AT

CAMP DAVID ABOUT THE NEED FOR TRILATERAL TALKS AS PART OF THE PROCESS. USG SEEMS CONSTANTLY TO BE CHANGING THE RULES OF THE GAME. HE AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT "WAVERING" THAT EGYPTIANS PERCEIVE IN USG POSITION AND WARNED OF THE DANGER TO THE U.S. "IMAGE" IN EGYPT AND THE ARAB WORLD THAT THIS PRODUCES.

3. I TOLD KAMEL THAT, WHILE WE UNDERSTOOD GOE UNHAPPINESS, THE SECRETARY'S DESCRIPTION OF SADAT'S REFUSAL AS "OBSTACLE" WAS SIMPLY A FACTUAL DESCRIPTION. I THOUGHT THAT EVEN HE, KAMEL, WOULD AGREE THAT IT IS THAT. (HE DEMURRED.) IT IS NOT OUR PURPOSE TO CAST BLAME ON EITHER PARTY, BUT HE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF WE CALL A SPADE A SPADE, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT INVOLVES A DRASTIC CHANGE IN PREVIOUSLY ACCEPTED PROCEDURES. AS HE KNEW, WE HAD ALSO DESCRIBED THE ISRAELI REPLIES TO OUR QUESTIONS AS "DISAPPOINTING". NOTWITHSTANDING OUR GENUINE DISAPPOINTMENT, WE ARE PREPARED TO GO AHEAD AND THE SECRETARY IS PROCEEDING ON HIS TRIP AS PLANNED. I URGED KAMEL LOOK AT THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE.

4. KAMEL EXPRESSED HIS HIGH REGARD FOR THE SECRETARY, BUT HIS CONCERN ABOUT OUR "OBSTACLE" DESCRIPTION WAS CLEARLY NOT ALLAYED. EILTS

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